

The Most Holy Eucharist

The holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation. Those who have been raised to the dignity of the royal priesthood by Baptism and configured more deeply to Christ by Confirmation participate with the whole community in the Lord's own sacrifice by means of the Eucharist. (*Catechism* #1322)

There are many things in this world that are truly priceless. You cannot put a price on the beauty of the mountains or other wonders of nature. You could never put a price on a parent's love or on the gift of a child. You cannot put a price on a faithful friend or a heroic act of charity. And you cannot put a price on the gift of the Most Holy Eucharist!

The Eucharist is an incredible mystery. It is, in fact, the mystery of all mysteries. We should prostrate ourselves before the divine majesty of God who is hidden behind the veil of the Sacred Host. Our senses are deceived, and we fail to perceive the reality present. It is only by the inspired gift of faith that we can come to see and believe in the True Presence. It is only by the grace of God that we can begin to comprehend the sublime mystery of the Most Holy Eucharist.

Essence Challenges our Five Senses

The Eucharist, simply put, is God. The Eucharist is God the Son, fully present in our world. It is Jesus, the eternal Son of God, fully present. The Eucharist is His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

God is made present to us in this form through the use of signs and symbols. But we should not fail to believe that the Eucharist is much more than signs and symbols. It could be said that the bread is a symbol of His Body, and the wine is a symbol of His Blood. This is true, but it is also far from complete. We must follow up that statement by saying that the bread, a symbol of His Body, actually becomes His Body, and the wine, a symbol of His Blood, actually becomes His Blood. We call this Transubstantiation. That's a big word with a lot of meaning.

"Transubstantiation" means that the substance is transformed. It's changed. But it also means that the external aspects of the bread and wine remain the same. They do not change to our sight, taste, touch or smell. They look the same, feel the same and taste the same. But they are not the same in their essence.

Try to imagine two primary parts of a piece of bread and a glass of wine. There are the external aspects and the essence. The external aspects are all those perceptible by the senses. But the essence is not perceptible in any way.

By analogy, it could be like closing your eyes and smelling a rose-scented perfume. Your nose tells you that a rose is before you; but, in reality, it is a manufactured fragrance. Your nose is deceived as to the essence of what is before you. It's not an actual rose, it's just chemicals. The exact opposite is true with the Eucharist. In fact, the Eucharist is even more "deceiving" in that all of our senses detect only bread and wine. We can break the bread and hear it crack, taste it, etc. Our senses tell us this is bread. But, in essence, it has been transformed into God, in the Person of Jesus the Son.

In order to understand this properly, we need a sort of "sixth sense." We need the spiritual sense of faith. Faith is a gift by which we come to know, with certainty, that this is no longer bread. Rather, it is God. It is the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of God the Son.

No amount of studying, reasoning, or arguing will convince us of this truth. But faith will. In fact, faith will convince us so deeply that we can come to believe with our whole being. And this is a conviction and level of belief that we can never arrive at using only our five senses or reasoning ability.

If this is hard to believe, then it's a sign that God wants to deepen your faith in the Eucharist. He wants you to meet His divine presence there in the depth of your soul. He wants you to know Him, love Him, adore Him and surrender your life to Him in this precious gift.

If you want to fully grasp the Mass and understand the full meaning of the Holy Eucharist, then you must understand this most precious gift from three perspectives. All three together make up the full meaning and reality of the Eucharist. These three perspectives are as follows: Sacrifice, Sacrament, and Communion. Let's start with Sacrifice.

The One Eternal Sacrifice

We must begin with an understanding of the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. Jesus, the Son of God, took on our fallen human nature and died for us once and for all. In His suffering and death, He destroyed death itself by rising victorious. But His death was a real death, and it was the perfect sacrifice and atonement for all our sins.

Therefore, the Mass is called, among many things, "The Holy Sacrifice." It is called this because that is what it is. Look at it this way: Jesus' death on the Cross took place almost 2,000 years ago. We were not there. Or were we? The truth is that every time we participate in the Mass, we are present at Calvary. And we are not

only present, we are participants. Every time we attend the Mass, it is as if time ceases and we enter into this timeless moment of the Sacrifice of Christ. We are there, not so much historically; rather, we are there essentially, truly and spiritually. Our soul is present to the Sacrifice of the Cross, and we are able to share in the fruits of that Sacrifice.

Again, this takes faith to understand, believe and experience. But remember that faith is not just believing. Faith is knowing. In this case, it's a "knowing" that enables us to also participate in that which takes place. Faith enables us to share in the one Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross made present to us through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Perhaps that's a bit deep. The Eucharist is deep! The Sacrifice of the Mass is a profound reality like none other. Sit and prayerfully ponder it. God will help you understand and make sense of it. And when you do begin to understand, you will start to appreciate the Mass like you never have before.

The Divine Sacrament Made Present

The Last Supper was the beginning act of the Sacrifice of the Cross. At that first Mass, Jesus took bread and said, "Take this, all of you, and eat of it. This is my Body." He then took the precious chalice of wine and said, "This is my Blood."

It's important to see that this Last Supper, the first Mass, continued from that Holy Thursday evening through Friday on the Cross and culminated in the Resurrection on Sunday. The Mass is this entire event of Jesus' life, death and resurrection all in one.

The fruit of the Mass is the gift of His True Presence under the appearance of bread and wine. This is the Sacrament of His Body and Blood. By "Sacrament" we mean here that the same God in Heaven, the same Eternal Son, is made present to us under the form of bread and wine. So, as we genuflect and kneel before the Holy Eucharist, we are kneeling before God Himself. This is an amazing reality and one that should leave us in awe every time we enter a church and see the tabernacle. It's an amazing reality that should draw us into an adoration chapel where the Eucharist is exposed for us to pray before His presence. God is truly with us in this precious gift.

Transforming Communion

As we said above, the Sacrifice of the Cross is made present through the celebration of the Mass. The fruit of this Sacrifice is the Sacramental True Presence of Christ our Lord hidden under the form of bread and wine. But these two essential aspects are not the end. God wants to take this wondrous gift one step further. He wants to unite Himself with us through Holy Communion. It is a command of Christ that we attend Mass every Sunday and holy day of obligation, but it's an act of love that invites us to a worthy reception of Holy Communion.

Holy Communion is the ultimate goal of the Eucharist. The reason Christ sacrificed Himself on the Cross and offered Himself in His Body and Blood is so that we can receive Him into our very soul through Holy Communion. This is what it's all about. This is the pinnacle! In fact, the Holy Eucharist is spoken of as both the source of our Christian life and also the summit. What a grace!

“Communion” means “union with.” And “union” means there is a transformation of two into one. That, of course, is what the reception of Holy Communion does. It enables us to let Jesus unite Himself with us in our human nature. And in this unity, we share not only in His death, we also share in His resurrection from death. This “death to sin and resurrection to new life” now becomes part of who we are. This is what the Christian life is all about. We see these truths clearly revealed in John's Gospel:

Jesus said to them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. ([Jn 6:53–56](#))

The last line, especially, reveals the unity that is established as a result of reception of the Holy Eucharist. To have Jesus remain in us and we in Him is the ultimate fruit of the Holy Mass.